

# GRAMOPHONE

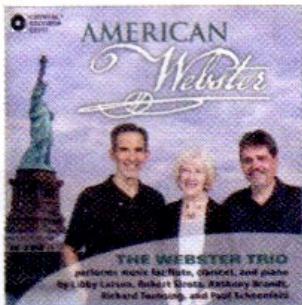
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

August 2016

## 'American Webster'

**Brandt** Round Top Trio **Larsen** Barn Dances  
**Schoenfeld** Sonata **Sirota** Birds of Paradise  
**Toensing** Children of Light  
**The Webster Trio**

Crystal Records © CD717 (67' • DDD)



The Webster Trio's premiere recordings of music by five American composers show that

the rare combination of flute, clarinet and piano has considerable range and depth, in addition to its obvious mellifluous charms.

The most ambitious work is Richard Toensing's *Children of Light*, a spiritual journey written for The Websters, set in five movements of differing mood and pace, drawing on the theology, language and music of the Orthodox Church, whose final vision is a radiant, impressionist haze. Robert Sirota's *Birds of Paradise* celebrated the 20th anniversary of flautist Leone Buyse and clarinetist Michael Webster's marriage, quoting Shelley's 'profuse strains of unpremeditated art' and commenting that 'every culture has its images of paradise, all of which include the sights and sounds of birds' – in Sirota's case those of Singapore and coastal Maine. It is by turns contemplative and excitable, and engages in

moments of explicit, intertwined love and beauty before ending on quieter notes.

The Websters provide lighter fare in the form of Libby Larsen's gently rousing set of four *Barn Dances*, including a homage to cowboy star Gene Autry; Anthony Brandt's brilliantly suspenseful *Round Top Trio*; and Paul Schoenfeld's Sonata, a magnificent *tour de morph* of three popular dances, the last a delirious Jig.

The trio, in residence at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston, play to their credentials: Buyse was principal in Boston and Webster principal in San Francisco, while Shepherd colleague pianist Robert Moeling adds exceptional sensitivity and poetry to his virtuosity. **Laurence Vittes**